

Jesus and After uses extracts from Biblical and other writings to outline the birth and early development of the Jesus sect of Judaism, its early simplicity, its later complication, and its separation from its Jewish parent. In addition to its focus on the past, it offers suggestions for the future of both religions.

“The author has accomplished something rare in this outstanding book: he has mingled careful textual study with a sense of theological urgency. The Jesus who emerges from Brooks’ expert philological excavation is, quite remarkably, a Jesus many of us who have wandered from the fold might want to revisit. Freed from the secondary accretions of what Brooks calls Beta Christianity, which includes such “stumbling blocks” as blood atonement and resurrection, the original Christian teaching shines forth with a kind of simplicity and directness that is both moving and relevant. And Brooks delivers all of this in language of admirable brevity and clarity. A must read for all of us interested in what Christianity once was.

– Stephen C Durrant, University of Oregon

“This book is a treasure for anyone interested in the actual history of early Christianity, the life of Jesus in his own time, his earliest followers, and how the movement evolved after the death of Jesus. I have read several books on this topic, but this one makes fuller use of the primary sources, and identifies and dates the layers in those sources. It lets the authors speak directly to the reader, and then provides fuller understanding by giving the historical context and motivations of the authors. It brings the early Jesus movement alive in all its human drama and complexity. It shows the many possibilities available to the movement, and how some of them continue to inspire Christians down to the present day. The result is a Christianity for modern grown-ups, who don’t have to believe that God created the laws of physics only to capriciously suspend them; who don’t need to depend on ancient superstitions about sacrificing goats or people to “save” or protect themselves. The book has an immediacy that I find convincing and exciting. It’s accessible to someone like me, who grew up immersed in Christianity, but who has not followed Biblical scholarship in depth for many years.”

– Paul Ropp, Clark University



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